

Jack Layton's legacy will resonate with Canadians for years

Canadians across the land woke up Monday to the devastating news that federal NDP leader Jack Layton had succumbed to cancer.

The end came quickly, too quickly, for Mr. Layton. He should have had the opportunity to build on his party's breakthrough in the spring federal election that saw his beloved party achieve official opposition status in the House of Commons, and relegated the uninspired and uninspiring Bloc Quebecois to the political wilderness.

But fate held a different hand for Mr. Layton. His legacy of lifelong work on behalf of working men and women, the disadvantaged, the under-represented and the marginalized will resonate for many years to

come.

His trajectory in politics, like his approach to policy and building support, required patience, perseverance, disciplined focus and a deeply held belief in the politics and practices of his New Democratic Party.

It culminated this past May with New Democrats winning 103 seats in the House of Commons, 22 of which are represented by Ontario ridings.

And though the NDP's left-leaning policies failed to inspire more support in Ontario and other provinces, his politics were always conducted respectfully, thoughtfully and with a focus purely on the issues.

An emerging theme among political

opponents past and present is that Mr. Layton could disagree deeply, but resolutely stuck to attacking policies, not those who disagreed. Even as the end loomed, Mr. Layton found the energy and reserve of strength to release a powerful essay calling on Canadians across the land to continue the fight on behalf of New Democrats, encouraging youth to bring innovation and change to the Canadian political landscape, and challenging Quebecers to continue marching in lockstep with the NDP following their "historic decision" in May.

The timing of Mr. Layton's death is doubly tragic given the achievement he led his party to in the federal election. But it provides an opportunity and will inspire New

Democrats to expand his legacy, to confront the challenges facing New Democrats, and forge new policies.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper should be recognized for extending an invitation to Mr. Layton's family for a state funeral, something normally reserved for current and former prime ministers or governors general, or current members of cabinet.

That act demonstrates the deep esteem in which Mr. Layton is held among parliamentarians, and is a fitting conclusion to honour a man who dedicated his life to ordinary Canadians.

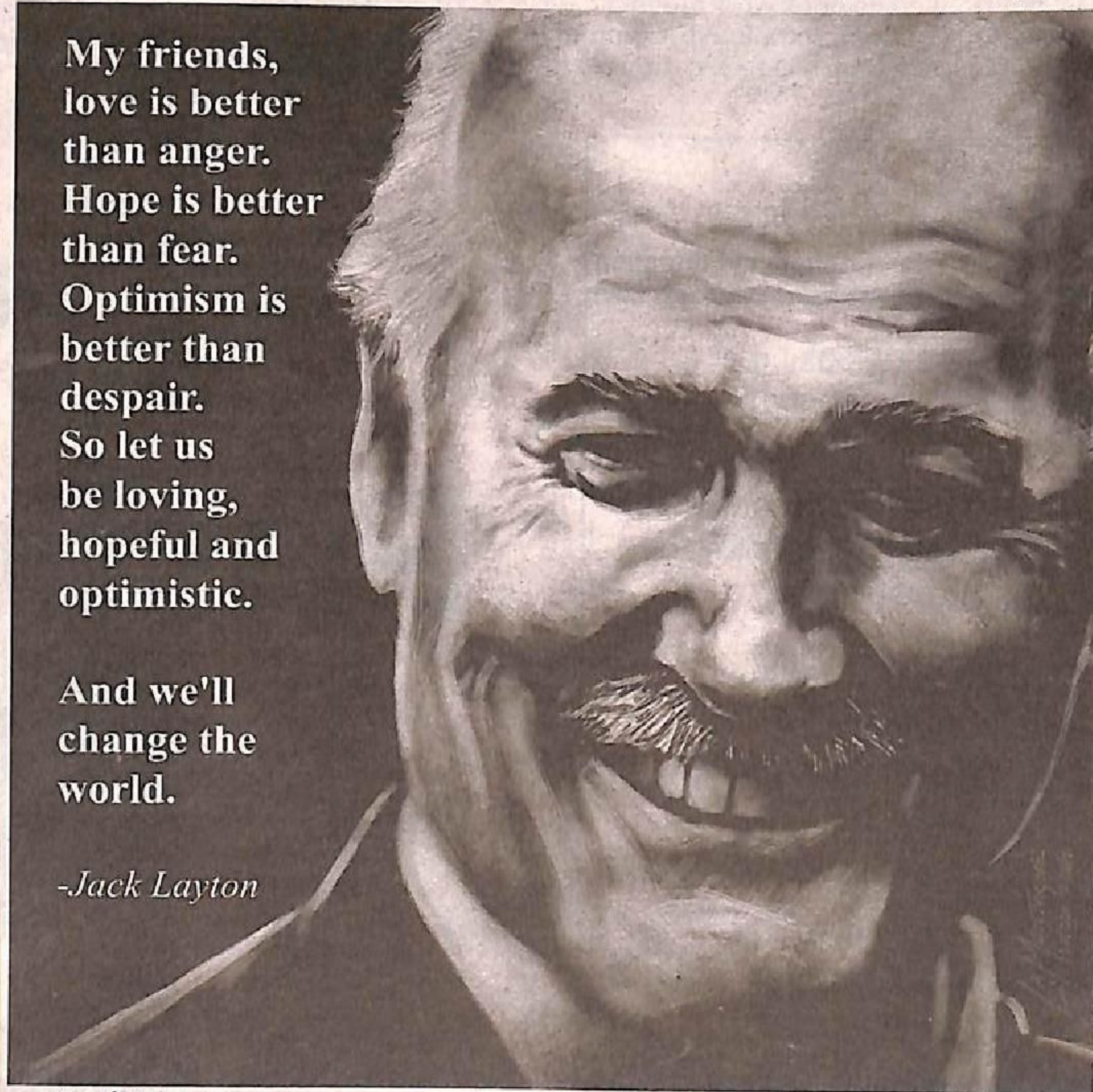
He'll be missed.

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**My friends,
love is better
than anger.
Hope is better
than fear.
Optimism is
better than
despair.
So let us
be loving,
hopeful and
optimistic.**

**And we'll
change the
world.**

-Jack Layton



NORTHUMBERLAND NEWS AUG 25/11

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